Pam - Africa.

Bantu Sociology

BY

ROBERT HAMILL NASSAU, S. T. D.

Author of

"FETISHISM IN WEST AFRICA," "THE YOUNGEST KING,"
"IN AN ELEPHANT CORRAL,"
and "MY OGOWE."

1914

Bantu Sociology

BY

ROBERT HAMILL NASSAU, S. T. D.

Author of

"Fetishism in West Africa," "The Youngest King,"
"In an Elephant Corral,"
and "My Ogowe."

1914

PRESS OF
ALLEN, LANE & SCOTT,
PHILADELPHIA.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
	Preface	4
I.	Population	5
II.	Ethnic and Linguistic Relationships	6
III.	Bantu Language	9
IV.	The Family	11
V.	Customs	12
VI.	Polygamy	13
VII.	Agrieulture	16
VIII.	Hunting and Fishing	18
IX.	Trade	19
X.	Arts	20
XI.	Tools	22
XII.	Medieines	23
XIII.	Etiquette	24
XIV.	Foods	25
XV.	Dress	30
XVI.	Health	32
XVII.	Cookery	33
XVIII.	Religious Festivals	35
XIX.	Seeret Soeieties	36
XX.	Musieal Instruments	37
XXI.	Amusements	38
XXII.	Folk-Lore Legends	39
XXIII.	Funerals	40

PREFACE.

The following statements, while true of the Western Equatorial African tribes, as I knew them from 1861 to 1906, are, in the main, true also of the entire Bantu connection. But, there will, in minor points, probably be some differences, in South and East Africa.

Africa covering three zones, naturally includes a great variety of peoples, customs, foods, and characteristics. What may be predicated of any given portion of that continent is not necessarily true of the whole.

These present statements are the result of my own observations, during my long residence in the Western equatorial belt; and are largely true also of the Bantu tribes of the entire Torrid Zone of Africa.

Bantu Sociology.

I. POPULATION.

It is very difficult to make an exact calculation of the population of this region. The original estimates were too high. The population of the entire continent, once reckoned at 200,000,000, is now more properly placed at 175,000,000, of these, probably only 100,000,000 are Negroes, of the two stocks, Bantu, and pure Negro (Guinea); the other 75,000,000 being Moors, Berbers, Copts, Gallas, and Arabs.

In the region sub-tended by a 400-mile coast-line (from one hundred miles south of the Equator, north to the Kamerun) and extending 500 miles into the interior, the explorer De Brazza estimated that there were, in the French Kongo, 15,000,000. (I think that De Brazza's figures are too large.) And Germany estimated, for her Batanga and Kamerun interior, 2,000,000.

Over the extremes of the continent, in the Sahara and Kalahari deserts, there is only one to the square mile; in the great Equatorial Forest, only eighteen to the square mile. (Much of that forest is included in De Brazza's region.) Native towns are located on the river banks; the land between the many rivers and lakes being uninhabited by human beings. I never saw in my quadrangle a town of one thousand inhabitants. There were scattered villages of from fifty to five hundred people. The coast-tribes die out, in the presence of foreign vice and rum. Of the twenty or more tribes I could name in my special equatorial region, I doubt whether any of them number over ten thousand, except the Bulu-Fañwe. In all the Fañwe clans possibly there is one million. I doubt whether to-day there are 6000 Mpongwe, or more than 3000 Bengas.

II. ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC RELATIONSHIPS.

Though the Bantu are undeniably of one common origin (with perhaps a little Arabic blood) their tribes are exceedingly clannish. To have reached the sea-coast, and to have come into *direct* trade-contact with the white man is the highest mark of tribal distinction. The coast-tribes all look with contempt on those of the interior; and, in their trade-monopoly (now broken) formerly they did not allow either the interior man to bring his ivory, etc., for sale directly to the white trader at the sea-side, or the trader to go inland to buy at first price. All the white man's goods, and all the interior tribesmen's ivory, etc., had to pass through the middle-man coast-tribe's hand (with an inevitable "commission" exacted).

Coast-tribe men married not only women of their own tribe, but also any others from any other "inferior" tribe. Yet, no coast-woman could dare to accept a lover or husband from any interior tribe. Even among the coast-tribes, there were similar social distinctions. Those who have only recently reached the sea are rated in a low stratum. In the equatorial region, the Mpongwes regard themselves the highest in the social scale. Mpongwe women are not permitted to marry "down," out of their tribe. And, as their rules of consanguinity are very far-reaching, some of their women cannot find satisfactory husbands. Because of this, and their education and their beauty, and for other reasons, they are much sought after as "common-law" wives, by white men, for a hundred miles up and down the Coast.

It is singular that tribes, living within one hundred miles of each other; in the same climate; wearing much the same clothing; eating much the same foods (in some, more of cassava: in others, more of plantain); the upper tribesmen constantly marrying lower-tribe women; habits

much the same; (though differing in the size, material, and comfort of their huts, and in their degree of cleanliness) should show such marked differences in physique, and even in feature. After many years of residence in that entire region, I could tell a stranger's origin, without looking at his tribal mark (not all the tribes have them), just as we, in the United States, can unhesitatingly fix on a German, a Frenchman, or an Italian. The Mpongwe men are light-colored, tall, handsome, graceful, polite; and many of their women beautiful. Southward, the Orungu are tall, athletic, but not finely formed. The Galwas are short, not handsome, and somewhat rude. North from Gaboon, the Bengas are tall, fierce, and roughly-built. The Kombe are short, stout, and faces unattractive. The Banâkâ, stout, dark-colored, and of medium height. The Fañwe, tall, angular, bold, and singularly vain in the dressing of their hair. In all these tribes there are at least five shades of color, from a coal-black to a pretty coffee-color. I have seen women as light as an American mulatto, who were nevertheless of pure Negro blood. (The mulatto is unmistakable; the mixture can actually be seen in the skin.) And, in all those same tribes, I have seen noses aquiline and almost Caucasian but for the distinctive spread of the alæ of the nostril. The lips of the Bantu, male or female, are not as everted and exaggerated as in the Guinea stock.

In my 300 mile-square district its score of dialects has been gathered in three groups. 1. The Southern, the Mpongwe, begins at the Gaboon river, twenty-three miles north of the equator, Cognate with it, to the south, is the Orungu; and, up the Ogowe delta, are Nkâmi ("Camma"), Galwa, Ajumba, Inenga, Ivili, and a few smaller ones. 2. At Corisco island, one degree north of the equator, begins the Benga group, with its cognates, Mbiko (on the east shore of the Bay), Bapuku, Kombe (at Benita), Evune, Igara (at Campo river), Banâkâ at Batanga on to the Kribi river. North of that, in the Kamerun region, the Isubu and Duala are also cognate

with the Benga. But I confine myself to my 400-mile quadrangle. Scattered in that quadrangle are a few other cognates of the Benga, even in the Mpongwe region, *e. g.*, Dikĕle, the dialect of the Akĕle (plural Bakĕle) tribe. 3. Subtending, in the interior, those 400 miles of coast, and extending both north and south of their termini, is the great cannibal tribe, the Fañwe, with its own cognates, the Bulu, on the north, and the Osheba on the south. They were brought specially to our notice by Du Chaillu, in his "Equatorial Africa" (1860, Harper's). His father, about 1840, was a French trader in the town of Libreville, Gaboon river, the headquarters of the French colonial government; and the son, before he came to the United States, had, as a young man, trading and hunting, traveled in the interior. (I remember, at Libreville, a mulatto half-sister of his.) He wrote the name of the tribe as "Fan," intending that the *n* should have the final French nasal sound. Bengas called it "Pangwe"; Mpongwe called it "Mpañwe"; De Brazza wrote it "Pahouin"; English "Fang." I prefer "Fañwe."

III. BANTU LANGUAGE.

The Bantu tribes of Africa cover its entire southern third, south of the fourth degree of north latitude. They are consitututed of probably a thousand bands, more or less unfriendly, each having its own dialect of a language known as the Bantu, whose grammar is one, in its rules of construction, for the entire thousand. The essential differences are only in their vocabulary. But these are simple, and easily acquired. The language is wonderfully regular, often alliterative in the agreement of adjectives and pronouns with the noun. The verb has exactly the structure of "species," as known in the Hebrew. None of those dialects were written until the advent of missionaries. By them, they were reduced to writing, the alphabetic signs used being those of English, on a method proposed by Lepsius. There are very few of the native sounds that are not represented by the English consonants. But a few special signs are used. And the vowels are expressed by the sounds of the vowels in the languages of southern Europe. Its constructions are simple, beautifully regular, a few rules applying for all. Its dialects are only differences in vocabulary; in the presence or absence of certain letters; and in a change in the prefixes, by which plurals are made.

In the dialects of my "quadrangle," Mpongwe is softer and more musical, with frequent use of R and W and Z. Benga somewhat harsh, with abundance of B G and K, and substituting L for R. Fañwe is harsh and curt, with decided disposition to drop the final vowel belonging to all other Bantu dialects. Before I went to Africa in 1861, a Grammar of the Mpongwe had already been prepared by the pioneer of that part of the Mission (Gaboon), Rev. J. L. Wilson, D.D. It sufficed for the needs of subsequent American workers at Gaboon, in the Ogowe, and as a guide for the English pioneers in the Kongo. It was revised by the Rev. Wm. Walker.

There was one also of the Benga made by the pioneer of the Corisco district, Rev. James L. Mackey; which I subsequently revised. That Grammar sufficed for the needs of subsequent workers among the Kombe, Bapuku, and Banâkâ.

Though several members of the Mission became proficient in Fañwe and its Bulu cognate, and they printed vocabularies and translations of Scripture, the first formal Grammar is a "hand-book" of Bulu, in these later years prepared by an independent traveler, Mr. Bates.

IV. THE FAMILY.

The unit in the community is the family, not the individual. In questions of marriage, the decision is not made by the man in the case. He does, indeed, on his own initiative, and by his personal action, make application to the family of the girl; but, throughout the entire subsequent proceedings, his family is constantly present. Himself alone has not sufficient means to pay the "dowry"-price demanded by the girl's family. His own family, therefore, contributes. When a certain sum, varying according to the social standing of the parties, has been paid, the man may take the girl, his ownership of her being such that he may demand of her any service, and may treat her with any degree of severity short of taking her life. Even in that event, his own life is not in danger; but the woman's family may demand of him a damage-fine. For, though the specified "dowry" was paid on the marriage-day, the girl's family still hold over her a shadowy claim, which the husband has to recognize in occasional presents of respect to that family, and especially to his mother-in-law. Marriage can be broken if the woman proves unsatisfactory; the grounds of complaint being disobedience or other refractory conduct or sterility. In such cases, the woman being returned to her family as an imperfect piece of goods, the family must either furnish another woman in her place or return a portion of the dowry paid.

V. CUSTOMS.

Of two prevalent customs, one, well-known in the Orient from the earliest ages (see Genesis 19:8), is that a guest is to be protected by his host from all danger, and is to be defended at any cost. The other, once common in Bantu tribes, but no longer existing since the advent of foreign governments, viz., that a man A, feeling himself wronged and unable to discover the offender, starts out to strike at random the first person B (however innocent) whom he may meet in the next village. B in turn revenges himself on his neighbor C in another village; and C passes the revenge on to D beyond. And so on. Presently the entire community becomes so aroused that they all unite with A in a sincere effort to discover the original offender, who is then adjudged to be the cause of all the damages done in the chain of fights, and he must pay not only for his wrong to A, but also for the losses of B, C, D, etc. In 1875, when I was making one of my first pioneering efforts in the Ogowe river, a certain village, aggrieved at some offender, seized my passing boat, with the idea of including me in "the chain," and thus obtaining my assistance. I indignantly broke "the chain" by accusing them of theft to the French authority.

VI. POLYGAMY.

The two relics of barbarism, slavery and polygamy, cover the entire continent of Africa. There Mohammedanism and Roman Catholicism still allow both. The eight European nations that have taken possession of that land, while they do forbid the export slave-trade, most of them still allow domestic slavery; but none of them forbids polygamy. The result, for women, is that their degradation is extreme; and the civilization of the continent necessarily is at a low grade. Polygamy is universal in all the Bantu, the tribes inhabiting the southern third of the continent. It is not based solely on masculine lust, but partly on the natural and commendable desire to accumulate property. A man's social standing is reckoned by the number of his wives. That number is limited only by his or his family's ability to assist him in purchasing another. The wrong consists in regarding a human being as "property." Worst of all, that a woman should be so regarded. In the marriage-market no female remains to years of womanhood unpurchased. The bargain with the child's parents is often made when she is an infant so as to secure her for a future wife. Girls rarely reach the age of twelve without being bargained for. The price depends on the prominence of her family and the pecuniary ability of the purchaser. The articles paid vary in different tribes, and in different parts of the continent, viz., a slave, cattle, guns, iron bars and other imported articles, *e. g.*, calico cloth, beads, brass jewelry, rum, etc. The consent of the girl is never asked. She may hate her purchaser; but it is in vain for her to refuse or rebel. Later, under cruelty, if she should run away from her (so-called) husband, her own parents would compel her to return to him; the alternative (which they will not comply with) being the return to the purchaser of the goods he had paid for her, which goods had probably already been spent by her father in buying himself another woman.

As one of the effects of this state of affairs (the balance in the division of the sexes being upset by the monopoly of polygamy) many a young man has no wife. Thence results an immoral condition, under which the polygamist, for a consideration of personal service in house-building, fishing or other work, allows the unmarried man the use of one of his women. If that arrangement were secretly made by this woman with that man as her lover, on discovery, she would be severely punished (perhaps an ear cut off) and the man heavily fined. In former days he would have been sold into slavery to the next adjacent seaward tribe. Such offenders and other criminals punished by deprivation of liberty in domestic slavery (instead of the penitentiary of civilization) furnished the first cargoes of the export slave-trade. Later, under the increased demands of the trade, inter-tribal wars were stimulated by foreigners, as a means of obtaining prisoners for a larger supply. The children of such temporary unions belonged to the polygamist husband. Naturally, therefore, where there was no doubt as to who was one's mother, there would be uncertainty as to who was one's father. Another degrading result of polygamy appeared when a young man obtained a wife, in his allowing his wifeless friend the use of her, on condition that the favor should be returned when that friend could finally obtain a woman for himself. Another evil, in the degradation of women, lies in the African's oriental hospitality. In providing food by day for a guest the host expects to provide him also with a female companion at night. The woman does not resent this; for she shares in the gifts which the parting guest next morning gives to his host.

Under all these frightful aspects of polygamy the native convert to Christianity, if a polygamist, meets a difficulty on his very first effort at a change of life. As a proof of his sincerity, the applicant for baptism is first required to choose the one of his women whom he will retain as his married wife, and send all the others away.

It is impossible to require that he shall send them back to their parents; for they are the "property" of his family, who assisted in their purchase. In his own sincerity he may be willing to lose his share of the goods that were paid for them and resign all claim on them, so that he shall not be a party to the selling of them to some other man. But he cannot prevent his family, who were fellow stockholders in that "property," from either marrying them themselves or selling them to other parties.

For those women, their being thus put away is not a disgrace. It is not a matter of public shame. Their original relation with the man had been an entirely commercial one, by arrangement with their parents. Their own consent had not been asked. Their love is rarely involved. And no one of them need remain unmarried a single month longer; for the wifeless men are ready promptly to apply for them. But, for the man himself, the test is a heavy one. As a polygamist, he had the service of his women as practical slaves, in plantation and kitchen. And his position in native "society" was one of respect. As a monogamist, he (to public eyes) lowers himself in the social scale, besides losing the money he had invested in the female "property." Fifty years ago our United States Government divested itself of one of the two "relics of barbarism." But I stand in shame that a representative of a so-called "Church," that advocates the other relic, is allowed a seat in our United States Senate.

VII. AGRICULTURE.

The native towns and villages are all built on or near the banks of the many lakes and rivers. These streams were formerly the only highways. Until recently there were no roads. (They have lately been made by the foreign governments, France and Germany, which appropriated West Equatorial Africa.) The interior forests had only narrow foot-paths, made by wild animals going to their drinking-places, or by hunters of rubber, ebony, gums, etc. The plantations are made in the forest, a half-mile or more distant from the villages. The only work done by the men, in agriculture, is the felling of the trees. A man cuts over an acre or two, in the dry season. The mass of fallen trees, after lying two or three weeks to dry, is fired by his wife. Without any further clearing, she begins to plant. She recognises that the ashes of the burned trees is a benefit to her crop. Knowing nothing about "fertilizers," she nevertheless observes that her plants grow best where the ashes lie the thickest. With a little trowel-shaped tool, she digs small holes some eight feet apart, in which she places her plantain-settings. At the same time, in other holes in the intervening spaces, she inserts cuttings of the cassava (manioc) bush; and, at random between all these, she plants sugar-cane, Indian-corn, okra, squash, yam, eddo, cayenne pepper, beans, and sweet potatoes. All these latter will bear and disappear in a few months; the manioc tubers will ripen in six months; and their bushes will have given their protecting shade to the young plantains, which will finally be the only occupants of that particular plot of ground, bearing fruit ten months later.

Every six months a new garden is to be made, to keep up the succession of crops. During all that interval, the entire care of the garden falls on the woman. She goes to it daily, to keep down the weeds, to get the day's

supply of vegetables in the basket on her back; and, from the burned timber, to carry on her head the log of wood she has cut for the fire on the clay floor of her hut. On occasions, she and her husband (or, sometimes, she alone) spend the night in a shed built in the garden, to guard it against the depredations of elephants, oxen, hogs, and other wild animals. As the women of any village usually have their garden-sites chosen contiguously, they play into each others hands by taking turns as to who shall go on certain nights to the watch-shed. A few men and women can do the watching for several gardens. The animals are frightened away by firing of guns, by shouts, flaring of torches, and beating of pans.

VIII. HUNTING AND FISHING.

The men recognize, as their special works, besides house-building and canoe-making, hunting and fishing. The hunt is to obtain for food the meat of any and all wild animals. There is no animal, and scarcely any part of it, that is not eaten. Wild beasts were formerly hunted with bow and poisoned arrow, spear, trap, and net; and later, by guns. In the hunting of the elephant there is also a most valuable gain in the acquisition of the ivory-tusk. Its sale to the white trader brings wealth to the hunter's home. Fishing, at the sea-coast, is skilfully done with deep-sea work; and with net and hook near the shore. And, in the rivers, with hook. In the two dry seasons, in small rivers, when the water is low, dams are built by both men and women. The intervening body of water is bailed out, and the captive fish are caught by the basketful. Sometimes also, the stream is poisoned with the juice of a mashed fruit. The poison does not affect the flesh of the fish; it only paralyzes.

IX. TRADE.

Trade with foreigners is carried on only by the men. They hunt the elephant; collect the palm-oil nuts; cut down the ebony, red dye-wood, mahogany, and other natural products. These they barter (there being, until recently, no currency) at the white trader's post or "factory," for rum, calico prints, guns, powder, crockery, hardware, iron bars, cheap jewelry, beads, etc., etc. An evil feature of the trade is that it is a "trust" system. Goods, in amounts varying from ten to a hundred dollars, are handed out to natives in advance, "on trust," before the native has done any work in the collection of the natural products. He will take his own time in making the collection. He spends most of the goods received, before making any effort to repay. And, he never does repay all. He receives a renewal of supplies; but his account with the white man is always in arrears. There comes a day when the native deliberately appropriates the last instalment, and makes no further effort at repayment. Being then dismissed by his employer, he starts credit with another. In the competition among the traders, the dismissed defaulter is accepted readily at a new post; for, he is sure to be honest for a while, in order to get a good name that will entitle him to a large advance. And, then, he is ready to default again. It is a very bad system, making the natives more dishonest than they naturally were; and cultivating dishonorable rivalry among the white traders; for, the defaulting native was formerly rarely punished by any law court.

X. ARTS.

The introduction of foreign goods has destroyed most of the few arts that the natives had received from their forefathers. They had weaving, pottery, and blacksmithing. As to weaving, there was very little call for its use. No clothing was worn by the children; scarcely any by the women; and very little by the men. Skins of animals were used. And of a certain tree the bark was removed in sections in size about four feet by two feet; the rough outer part was cut away, leaving the soft inner portion, which was then soaked in water and beaten with a pestle. The fibers run in a remarkable warp-and-woof arrangement, making a soft cloth-like piece. The loom was very simple, containing the principle of our civilized machine. The material woven was the split soft unexpanded leaflets of a palm-tree, making pieces of so-called "grass cloth," about twenty inches in width and some three feet in length, the size of an ordinary towel. They were pieced together in making mosquito-nets. For pottery, certain earths were found which yielded well in moulding of pots and jars, which was done entirely by hand. These, after being sun-dried, were burned in a wood fire. Some of them were japanned with a native gum.

In every village is a smithy; the fire of wood; the bellows such as is depicted on the ancient monuments of Egypt. (There is reason to believe that Central Africa drew its civilization from Egypt.) In the interior, there are places where, before white men introduced iron bars, the natives found seams of iron ore cropping out of the ground. They smelted the ore with wood-fire (charcoal) in clay furnaces. The resultant cast-iron they beat, under different degrees of heat, into wrought iron. Like our own civilized blacksmiths, at certain stages of the process, they rubbed the hot metal onto a silica-laden clay. And, watching the color of the flame at certain

stages, they could temper or untemper the iron for the special purpose desired. Thus they now work the imported iron bars into knives, spears, fish-hooks, axes, and other tools. For the felling of some trees, they prefer their own little axes to our foreign ones. The latter, being very hard and of high temper, are brittle against very hard woods. The native axe will dull, but does not break. This native smithy still remains in almost all villages. But, the loom and pottery have almost disappeared before the abundance of foreign cloth and crockery.

XI. TOOLS.

The native tool most in use by men is a long knife (machete) worn as a dagger at one's side, hanging from the girdle. It is used for all purposes; to cut one's meat; to slash away obstructive branches on the path; to cut grass and weeds; and as a weapon of both defense and offense. The spears formerly used were of different lengths and sizes, according as they were for use against different animals.

A singular cross-bow of great power was used in the shooting of poisoned arrows. The handle was split to a certain extent. Two fingers of the hunter's right hand were inserted between the splits of the handle at its near end. The left hand clasped the handle near the distant end, just where the string of the bow lay in a notch. In the line of the notch was a hole in the upper half of the split-handle. Into that hole projected a small plug set in the lower half. Instead of a trigger being pulled, as in a gun, at the proper moment of firing, the hunter's left hand suddenly squeezed the two split halves together; the plug was thus forced up into the notch, and the string was released. Other tools were axes, garden trowels, and harpoons.

XII. MEDICINES.

The native doctor is a sorcerer. He does indeed prescribe vegetable medicines, some of which may possibly be indicated as desirable by the patient's symptoms. This desirability has not been indicated by any knowledge of anatomy or physiology. There is only a haphazard memory that certain drugs had happened to be useful in certain diseases. But, even in such cases, it is not the *drug* that is considered efficient. An associated *spirit*, to whom the drug is somehow pleasing, is the efficient means of cure. That spirit is invoked by the sorcerer-doctor with incantations, drum and other ceremonies; and allows itself to be confined in some material object, *e. g.*, a shell or a small horn, into which the ashes of the drugs have been placed. It will remain there, healing the patient, only just as long as the latter complies with the requisitions of a certain ritual of prayer and sacrifice. This system of sorcery develops itself into a wider practice of witchcraft. The doctor claims not only to be able to cure disease by aid of spirits, but also to help in all human interests, of planting, fishing, hunting, marrying, etc. And, more than all these, to protect against the machinations of all enemies, even to the destruction of the latter. The material object, called a fetish, containing the assisting spirit, is carefully carried on the body of the devotee. But that spirit will be displeased, and will depart if the devotee fails in any of the minute ritualistic requirements. That fetish is then no longer of use (except to sell to the curio-hunting white man). A new one must be obtained.

XIII. ETIQUETTE.

In the matter of salutation there are a variety of forms, fitted to different degrees of acquaintanceship; just as in civilization. The most common form is for the inferior to salute the superior with the word "Mbolo." As to inferiority, it belongs to youth as compared with age; to a woman as compared with a man; to a slave as to a master; to a host or hostess as to a visitor or guest, even if that visitor be a child or a woman. "Mbolo" is a verbal noun, meaning "grey hair," from an irregular defective verb, "to grow old." The salutation means "may you live to have grey hairs," *i. e.*, "long life to you!" The response is, "Ai! Mbolo!" In saluting a company of visitors, or, on the road, only one of them, who is supposed to be their leader, is named; but the verb is then in the plural, "Mbolani."

Among intimate friends, as the visitor is seen approaching, the host, male or female, advances with outstretched arms, ejaculating, "Iyĕ! Sale!" (Hail! Welcome); and then the host's arms embrace the visitor, patting him or her on the back, and rapidly saying, "Samba, samba, samba," (an oath); the visitor, at the same time, responding with the embrace, the patting, and the samba.

The courtesy extended to guests is oriental. The guest is to be given the best; may (like the Queen of Sheba from Solomon) ask for anything; is to be protected from theft or assault by any enemy from any adjacent place, and to any extent. A part of hospitality formerly (and in many tribes at present) was to provide for the male visitor at night a female companion. This was one of the justifications of polygamy. For all these favors a return in kind was to be made by the guest when next he should play the role of host. As foreign white men cannot conveniently take that role, they pay for the favors given them as guests when they close their visit, giving presents of cloth, tobacco, beads, etc.

XIV. FOODS.

1. Vegetables. None of these peoples are vegetarians from choice. Sometimes custom, or ill-success in hunting, may compel a diet of herbs for even weeks. But, when the opportunity comes, there is a gorging of meat sufficient to cover the painful memory of the previous deprivation.

If botanists are correct, Africa long ago was poorly supplied with vegetable foods; for, two of the present staffs, plantain and cassava, are supposed not to be indigenous, but to have been introduced, respectively, from Arabia and South America. This article's limits forbid my entering the very interesting subject of the distribution of plants and animals, as related to ocean currents, early voyages, seismic divisions, and possibly a submerged Atlantis. (1) The plantain is a species of the genus musa. It is a most healthful food; widely distributed; and largely used. Each plant bears but one bunch of fruit; to obtain which the stem is cut down. But there are always several shoots at its base, the largest of which immediately takes the place of the parent. This process goes on indefinitely, each shoot producing its bunch in from eight to twelve months. It is never eaten raw. It is gathered by the natives before it is ripe. They claim that in this stage it contains more nourishment, its starchy matter not having been replaced by the sugar. They always boil it. Foreigners prefer to allow the fruit to ripen, either on or off the plant. Then we use it boiled; or, if quite ripe, baked; or over-ripe, sliced and fried. It is cooked in all ways in which our "Irish" potatoes are prepared. There are many varieties of the plantain, marked by differences in size of the fruits, color of the rind, or their mode of arrangement on the bunch. There is a very general misunderstanding about the banana (which is also a species of musa). All over the United States a certain variety of banana is miscalled

"plantain;" and in many books of African travel the plantain is miscalled "banana." The two plants are indeed very much alike, resembling each other (as an apple tree does a pear tree). But the plantain fruit when ripe is always yellow inside; it is very much larger than a banana; and a bunch, instead of containing (as the banana) several hundred "fingers" crowded closely, has at most only from thirty to forty, hanging quite apart. African employees would mutiny if offered "bananas" as their rations. They use the banana only raw as a recreation between meals, as we do an apple. Of bananas there are also several varieties, marked by size, or color of rind. Inside the banana is always white.

2. Cassava, or cassada, is the South American "manioc" (jatropha manihot, or mandioca). From it is obtained our tapioca. There are two varieties, known by a slight difference in the leaf. One, the sweet, is less productive than the other, the far more common one; the latter contains a poisonous juice. The gathering of the tubers destroys the bush; but it is immediately replanted by cuttings of the stems of the bush, which reproduce six or eight months later. The tubers, which are almost solid starch, are gathered in baskets, which are set in running water for two days. They ferment; and the poisonous quality is eliminated. They are then peeled and beaten in a wooden trough, most of the few woody fibers being retained. Rolls of this dough-like mass, in size about fourteen inches by two inches, are tied in leaves of plantain or phryneum; placed with a little water in large iron pots over a fireplace, and covered closely so as to retain the steam, which then bursts the starch-grains. These rolls are eaten by the natives in this only partially cooked state, with much salt, cayenne pepper pods, oily nut gravies, and the broth of whatever may be the meat of the day. Usually even a little meat suffices. But foreigners rarely eat of these sour cassava rolls unless they first slice and toast them. This toasting thoroughly cooks and removes the offensively sour taste and odor. Native laborers assert that cassava is more

strengthening for work than any other of their staffs of life. This may be so; for their digestion is good. But I have supposed the sour cassava to be the cause of the lumbricoid worms with which all our Bantu natives, young and old, are afflicted. The leaves of the cassava are commonly used as greens.

(3) The eddo (yautia) is an arum esculentum, the tuber of a calladium, known in the United States for an ornamental plant, under a common name, as "elephant-ear." This tuber is conveniently twisted from the parent stock, just below the surface of the ground, the while that the plant continues to grow and produces other tubers. It is cooked in every mode in which we prepare our Irish potato, for which it is a good substitute. It is not as dry as the latter, having in it a sticky gluten. Its young undeveloped leaves are used as greens. Both the tubers and the leaves are enjoyed by foreigners. But, in the cooking of both, care must be used to pour off the first water in which they are boiled, as it is very acrid, the plant being a relative of our American "Indian turnip."

(4) The yam has several varieties, white and yellow, large and small. It is a very good substitute for the Irish potato. There is a very general misunderstanding in the United States about the word "yam." What is known under that name in our markets is no *yam* at all, but is only a large coarse variety of our common sweet potato. The real yam belongs to an entirely different botanical family. It is a tuber of any rough knotty shape, from the size of one's fist to that of one's thigh. It grows with a woody, thorny vine that does not trail on the ground, but clambers over adjacent bushes. The bulbous projections that cover the parent tuber are broken off as they come to a proper size for table use; and the parent tuber goes on evolving new projections. The skin is thick and very dark. But the interior is white or yellow and very hard, even after being cooked; in which hard form the natives usually eat it. Foreigners always have it mashed, in which state it is dryer even than the Irish potato, which it resembles in taste.

(5) Ground nuts are grown more or less by all the tribes. But I know of only a few who make them their chief article of food. They are exported largely to Europe for the adulteration of olive oil.

(6) Rice, the staple food of some of the West African tribes (and particularly of the strongest laborer on the foreign steamships, the Kru-man of Liberia), and "mealies," the common food of the South African, are not much cultivated by the natives of the Torrid Zone.

Besides the above-named four or five chief staffs, almost any native garden has more or less of maize, squash, pumpkin, okra (gumbo), greens of several kinds, the indispensable cayenne pepper pods, and a calabash or gourd, from whose seeds is made a rich pudding. In the forest are gathered a variety of oily nuts (besides the common palm), one of which, the kernel of the wild mango, makes a rich gravy (odika) much enjoyed even by foreigners. At all the gardens on the sea coast, have been introduced from Europe and the United States our common garden seeds and plants, tomato, cabbage, cucumber, egg plant, etc. From the West Indies have been brought the bread-fruit tree and the avocado pear (miscalled the "alligator").

2. Animal. (1) The animal foods are fish and the flesh of wild beasts. The fish are very abundant from the sea, bays, and mouths of the numerous rivers. But up the streams, uncertain except in particular seasons, where the waters are low, when enormous quantities are caught in the pools and dried for future consumption. Of the wild animals—elephant, hog, ox, varieties of antelopes, monkeys, gorillas, snakes; and smaller ones, such as the genet, civet, iguana, and porcupine; and (in the rivers) hippopotamus, alligator, crocodile (the gavial of India), and the luscious-fleshed manatee (dugong); *all* these, even their skin, are, without exception, eaten by the interior tribes. I know of no part of any of these animals that in the butchering of them is thrown away except the gall bladder and the urinary bladder.

All of those interior tribes were, and still to-day are, more or less cannibalistic in their tastes. But I must explain that this cannibalism is different from the reported taste of the South Sea islander, who is represented as actually keeping on hand victims to be fattened for a feast. (I am aware of the old "chestnut" that represents a missionary as the favorite article of diet of those islanders. There are only three cases known in which a missionary has there been murdered and eaten.) The African cannibal, as an act of triumph, having killed his enemy in war, completes the conquest by eating him. It is true, however, that this taste for human flesh having been formed, the men of the interior do sometimes barter for the bodies of those who have recently died, villages exchanging favors for that purpose. But I have never heard of a family eating its own dead. And in none of those cannibal feasts are women allowed to partake. (I have suspected that this was a part of masculine selfishness; for, the same prohibition is frequently made of the meat of some of the wild beasts.) At the sea coast, however, contact with civilization has made the native sensitive to the charge that his forefathers were cannibals, and he resents it. Also the coast-native looks with hesitation at flesh of gorillas or monkeys, saying that they too much resembled human beings. They share also in the civilized feeling of abhorrence toward the flesh of a snake. When there has been a successful hunt, and there is a greater amount of flesh than can be eaten at once, it, as in the case of fish, is smoke-dried for future use. But the process of drying is always incomplete; worms are bred, and the decayed meat is offensive to foreign sight and smell. But the native eats it. I have suspected it to be a cause of the prevalent disgusting skin diseases and frightful phagedenic ulcers of the leg. There are, indeed, domestic goats, sheep, ducks and chickens; but they are not depended on as daily food. They are eaten only on festive occasions, marriages, etc., and when their blood has been required in some sacrificial ceremony, or for sale to foreigners.

XV. DRESS.

The dress of the interior tribes, before any form of civilization reached them, was the very minimum with men; and almost entire nudity with women. Boys and girls, until they were eight or ten years of age, went perfectly nude.

For women, the minimum was a cord around the loins, to which were tied in front a handful of leaves; and, over the gluteal muscles a mop-like screen or fringe made of strings of dried palm leaves. Men wore a waist-cloth covering both hips, made either of a wild animals' skin, or of the fiber of the inner bark of a certain tree (as already described in X. Arts), which, when macerated in water and beaten to pliability, showed an actual warp-and woof in its structure. On a very rude but successful loom there were woven also small lengths of cloths from threads made of the soft unexpanded leaves of the palm (as already mentioned under X. Arts). Those threads resembled grass; whence foreigners have mistakenly called it "grass-cloth." But, on the sea-coast, while there is no adult nudity, there are many stages of the amount of body-covering used, from the enlarged waist-cloth to the complete outside female frock, or masculine suit of coat and trousers. When caravans come from the interior, the men bring their wives or sisters to carry their burdens for them. Only on such occasions will an almost nude woman be seen. At Batanga, one-day, I was pained to see such an exhibition, and I asked a female member of our church, who was entertaining one of those women as her guest, to require her to wear some clothing while in our midst. She said that she had offered one of her own dresses for the few days of the visit. But the visitor had refused, saying, "I think that you women who cover your bodies have some sores in your skin which you wish to hide. If a woman has a good body, she should like it to be

seen." In her absence of dress, there was no immodest display of her nakedness, nor any apparent sense of shame, beyond the universal feminine call for the ancestral fig-leaf. On the sea-coast, the desire of both men and women to imitate the foreigner in almost everything of the outward show of civilization, even before they have accepted the inward truths of Christianity, often leads to a grotesque extravagance, and even dishonest efforts to obtain mere ornaments beyond the actual desirable covering of decent dress.

XVI. HEALTH.

In this matter of dress may be found one of the causes of the frequent ill-health of the semi-civilized native. *Dress* is good; but *incompatible* dress is not. While the native was an almost nude or half-clad savage, his dress was consistent with his surroundings; his hut, his fire on the clay floor, his medications, etc., etc., his skin was less sensitive to variations in climatic temperature, and his digestion was normal with his food and cookery. On his emerging into civilization, these various lines of life were not kept parallel or uniform in motion or progress. Often, food did not consist with habits, nor dress with house, nor expenses with employment. Conditions often became even less healthful than in the simpler stages of a primitive life. In their transition period as a people, pneumonia is common, and early deaths frequent, and infant mortality greater. Many a tribe has died out on the sea-coast. For hundreds of years, waves of tribes have succeeded each other in reaching the goal of native ambition—The Sea. In a few generations they have disappeared, as if swallowed up by that sea. The civilization they met with was a very imperfect one, as presented to them by the foreigners, the majority of whom lived lives immoral that by their shortness have given an evil name to the West Coast of Africa.

But, even in the far interior, the savage, in his wild life, was not free from the results of his own polygamy, and some unsanitary habits. He had skin diseases, and ulcers, and tumors. Some tribes, like the Zulu (one of the best Bantu types) were men and women of fine physical development. But they had not the vitality to resist rapid diminution, under foreign diseases of syphilis, small-pox, alcoholism, and a sudden change in living conditions.

XVII. COOKERY.

The common staffs of life, cassava, plantain, yams, and eddo are all boiled. So also are all the meats; they never were fried; sometimes hastily roasted. The vessels used are sometimes native pottery; but generally imported iron and brass pots or kettles are used. The fire-place is in the middle of the clay floor of one of the three rooms of the ordinary hut. A typical hut, in size twenty feet by ten feet, is thus divided:—one-half of the area is the public sitting-room or kitchen of the dwelling; the remaining half is sub-divided into two rooms, each ten feet by five feet, one of which is the bed-room, the other is the store-room. For ordinary families, all three apartments are used for sleeping in at night. Richer men give a special hut as kitchen and sleeping-room for each wife.

The fire is built with three logs, thus:—the ends only a few inches from each other, at angles of 120°. In the three interstices of the angles, small kindling woods are thrust from time to time to keep up the blaze. As the ends of the logs burn away they are shoved up toward each other. The pot rests on the edges of these three ends. Sometimes, instead of the logs, three stones are used on which to stand the pot, and the pieces of wood and kindlings are thrust into the intervening angles. Fires are kept burning all day, for the constant cooking for different members of the family and their chosen convenient hour of eating, and for random guests. At night, the smoke is deterrent of mosquitoes.

Over the fire, suspended from the low roof, are bamboo frames, on which meats are constantly dried. Fish is preferably cooked, tied up in a bunch of several thicknesses of plantain leaves, in which are added also a little water, salt, cayenne pepper pods, and some oily nuts. This bundle is set, not in a flame, but on a bed of hot coals. The confined water is converted into steam; and by it

the fish is cooked. The process is neither roasting, frying, nor broiling. The flesh is thoroughly cooked without any part of it being burned. And the melted oily nuts make a pleasant gravy. A most attractive fashion of cooking fish! All foreigners learn to like it. For myself, I know no civilized manner of cooking fish so agreeable in taste and odor.

XVIII. RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS.

I did not meet with any festivals which I regarded as distinctly religious. There are feasts, *e. g.*, at marriages, at harvestings, and welcome of friends returning from journeys. But none of those have any special religious significance. Rather, the dark dreads connected with the making of a fetish-charm for assistance in plans of life, and in protection against or destruction of enemies are generally so secret with the interested individual that he or she has no desire to share it with others. Certainly, there is no feasting connected with the fetish-making ceremonies.

XIX. SECRET SOCIETIES.

In the Benga—affiliated tribes, there was an Ukuku ("Spirit") Society. In the Mpongwe, and especially in the Ogowe river, there was the Yasi. These were composed only of men. Their meetings were secret. An appointed man, changing his voice so as not to be recognized, shouted aloud the Society's decree. To disobey it was prompt death to any man, woman, or child. Violent punishment was given to any woman or child who even accidentally on the path happened to see the Society in procession. The object of the Society was governmental. At its decree, the over-grown paths would promptly be cleaned by the women who had dared to fail to comply with their husbands orders for that purpose. Quarrels between families or tribes, that a chief could not control, were thus ended. Boycotts made by Ukuku or Yasi on foreigners, in the interest of a strike for higher wages, were stronger than a United States trades-union call-off. Once at Benita, in 1869, and, again in the Ogowe, in 1879, they assailed my life. Traders generally succeeded in breaking the boycott with secret bribes of rum.

Among Mpongwe women was a secret Njĕmbe Society, so strong that men were afraid of it. [I have fully described it in my "Fetishism in West Africa." Scribners.]

XX. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

The musical instruments are principally drums and harps. The latter are used only for amusement, generally by solcists, playing for themselves. The drums are of several sizes, made from the hollowed log of a very soft wood; one end is covered with the stretched skin of a goat or other animal. It is beaten either by a short stick, or the knuckles of the player. They are used for all purposes: personal amusement, the beating of time in a dance, or in religious ceremonies, and at all feasts. The most remarkable drum is the telegraph drum. It is used for sending signals. A hard, resonant wood is chosen; a log some three feet long and some eighteen inches in diameter is cut. In the middle of a side a longitudinal slot is chipped, some fourteen inches by two inches, and through it the interior is chiseled out. Of course, a uniform thickness cannot be maintained of the circumference of the log. Near the slot it will be less than two inches thick; farther off it will be three or four inches in thickness. The ends are solid. The signals are struck by a short wooden club.

This instrument was in existence before our Morse system of telegraphic signals was invented. I never learned the code, but I saw that the strokes varied in *force* and in *rapidity*, and these were further enlarged by the *portion* of the drum stricken, whether the wall was *thick* or *thin*. Certain strokes meant a phrase. Across an unobstructed body of water, or a prairie, the sounds could possibly be heard ten miles. I have heard them three miles. With a favorable wind they are ordinarily heard through the forest from town to town two miles (A traveler in Africa, on a three-months' tour, reported that the sounds could be heard twenty miles.) That would be possible only by having the signal repeated by other drums from town to town. In that way signals have been sent for fifty or more miles; inland towns thus being warned of the movements of foreign government agents on the sea coast.

XXI. AMUSEMENTS.

The amusements of girls are few. They follow their mothers in the work at the gardens and in the kitchens. But they make rudely-shaped dolls out of plantain stalks and leaves. Boys make little boats and canoes and bows and arrows, and they bowl wheels cut out of a large tuber on the sea beach or the level street of the village. For young men there are contests in wrestling, as champions from rival villages, before an admiring and shouting crowd, reminding one of the football enthusiasm in civilization.

Dances are of various kinds; some purely for amusement, as in the evening plays; or at a feast, or a marriage; and others connected with fetish religious ceremonies. They are simple, and generally without immodesty. Both men and women participate, sometimes men alone, sometimes women alone; at other times both sexes. But in their movements there is rarely a clasping of each others bodies, as in some of the dances of civilization. Each dancer generally moves alone, or hand-in-hand in line. The motions of the men are awkward, grotesque and ungainly; of the women, more graceful. In some dances, had only for show, a woman poses singly, barely moving from one spot, but thrilling in various lascivious attitudes the muscles of her entire body.

XXII. FOLK-LORE LEGENDS.

In pleasant evenings, after the day's work is done, men, women and children and visitors gather under the eaves of the huts on the sides of the one long street of the village to listen to dramatic renditions of their folk-lore legends by skilled actors. These men occupy, in the public estimation, the position of lyceum lecturers in civilization. These tales were the literature of the country for thousands of years; the people having been without books until, on the coming of missionaries, less than one hundred years ago, the language was reduced to writing. Generally, there is some lesson or moral taught by the story, and sometimes the narrator definitely mentions it.

XXIII. FUNERALS.

Funeral ceremonies differ in different tribes. Formerly coffins were unknown. The corpse was thrown into a dark portion of the forest not used for gardens; and no mark of respect was raised over it, except in the case of chiefs. Immediately, on the death of the sick, there are all kinds of wails of grief, real and simulated, and firing of guns, and shouts, in order to drive away the spirit of the dead, lest it commence revenges for enmities incurred during its life-time. Though the Africans do not claim that one should never die, the assumption in every case, even of what elsewhere would be called natural death, is that the decease was premature, and caused by witchcraft influences. This belief is very deep-seated; for, every one there knows that he or she at some time has engaged in sorcery machinations to injure someone else, and there is a universal conviction that the dead has been bewitched by somebody. Everyone, to clear himself or herself, hastens to escape suspicion by showing excessive signs of grief, or by vigorous direction of suspicion to some unloved wife or helpless slave. Before the burial it is considered the duty of the nearest relative or dearest friend to sit by the corpse holding its head in one's lap.

At an appointed hour the body is carried away by only a few male relatives. On their return from the grave they go through a ceremony of washing. In some tribes the grave was dug in the floor of the hut of the deceased. Since contact with foreigners, coffins have been adopted.

Before the advent of white governments, for every death there was at least one witchcraft murder; for persons of importance, several; for chiefs, a dozen; and for kings, scores of wives and other slaves. In Dahomy, formerly, they amounted to hundreds.

DATE DUE

SEP 30 '69			
OCT 9 '69			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.